

XIRIIRKA URURRADA SHAQAALAHA
SOOMAALIYEED (XUSS)



FEDERATION OF SOMALI TRADE
UNIONS (FESTU)

1^{da} May waa Maalinteenna

1st May is Ours

May 1, 2020

DABAALDEGA MAALINTA SHAQAALAHA ADDUUNKA
CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

MAALIN FARXAD LEH DHAMMAAN SHAQAALAHA SOOMAALIYEED
HAPPY LABOUR DAY TO ALL SOMALI WORKERS

Aynu is Adkeyno oo aan la Dirirno Cudurka #COVID19
Let's Stay Strong and Fight the #COVID19

Message on International Workers' Day

1 May 2020

Traditionally, International Workers' Day, 1st May, is reserved for the celebration of the contribution of workers to socio-economic advancement for the overall survival of humanity. This year, celebration of May Day or International Workers' Day, for very obvious reasons is low key, if not non-existent in many parts of Somalia. This is largely due to the physical distance measures put in place to protect the public, including workers, from the raging terrible COVID-19 pandemic.

The absence of the usual external fanfare during this year's May Day celebration does not diminish the importance that the Somali workers attach to the International Workers' Day. On the contrary, the opposite is correct. It is hardly possible to remember the exceptional courage shown by many frontline workers during this unprecedented difficult period in human history. These frontline workers, which include health workers, journalists, government officials, transport employees, workers in the informal economy and security forces, have in some instances gone the extra mile beyond the demands of their duty to embody a Somali spirit just to save lives and protect our poorly resourced healthcare system. Despite their health risks amid the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) coupled with little or no recognition of their sacrifices, they continue to report for work.

Today, the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU) and all the working women and men in Somalia are shouting loudly from the top of a virtual mountain to salute our frontline workers for their bravery and immeasurable sacrifices, before, during and after the fight against the coronavirus pandemic – a battle that we shall ultimately overcome no matter how long it will take. Their priceless sacrifices for our survival will never be forgotten.

The efforts by frontline workers to keep our national economy and entire country afloat and functional in the wake of this COVID-19 pandemic should leave no doubt in our minds of how integral they are to Somali society. We therefore, call upon the Federal Government, the Federal Member States and the private sector employers to scale up efforts to guarantee their protection and ensure the provision of incentives for the frontline workers. Specifically, FESTU demands a sufficient supply of PPEs and hand sanitizers for workers, especially the frontline workers.

In addition, functional hygienic wash rooms, suitable and safe rest rooms and other facilities must be made accessible to ensure that workers and in particular frontline workers are safe, protected and empowered to carry out their duties efficiently. Our survival literally depends on their ability of being able to do this.

Arguably, with less support from management and public protection agencies many frontline workers are particularly vulnerable at this time to labour exploitation, acts of injustice and abuse including gender-based violence. FESTU and affiliated unions will not relent in exposing and reporting those who want to take advantage of our courageous frontline warriors during this difficult time in our history.

As this fight against this invincible and dreadful pandemic cannot be won alone, FESTU urges the government of Somalia, members of the business community and the working people of our beloved country to join forces with the international community at all levels to defeat this virus. We call on the government and the private employers to safeguard workers' jobs, wages/salaries, benefits and incomes as we continue to battle this virus. In such time of uncertainty, workers and families need to be able to rely on a predictable source of income to support their households and generally cushion themselves against the shocks and negative financial impact created by the pandemic. Anything else will be inhumane.

Although we are all affected by the pandemic, our differential socio-economic status determines how we will each feel the pain engendered by this COVID-19 crisis. We therefore urge the government and the private employers to show true solidarity by sharing the wealth created by working women and men of Somalia.

Once the critical phase of the pandemic has passed and employees slowly resume work, we call on the government and the owners of enterprises to sustain the focus on hygiene and social distancing that the pandemic warranted. This includes deploying labour inspectors to ensure enforcement and compliance with standard health and safety guidelines as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and health authorities.

This year Somalia will be celebrating its 60th independence anniversary, a reality that would not have been possible without the hard work and sacrifices of workers who fully identified with the liberation struggle. Sadly, Somali workers are yet to enjoy full and unhindered freedom as they continue to face gross human and labour rights abuses. In addition, workers' organisations still face many uphill battles to function effectively and without interference in the interest of workers. Despite this, workers continue to reject this circumvention of their rights and stand strong.

Finally, as we battle the pandemic and commemorate this Workers' Day, we are reminded in the most poignant and tragic ways, that workers are central to Somali society. Let us remember the workers' desire for an unwavering support to not only see us through this difficult period but to help ensure that we enter the sixth decade of Somali independence on a triumphant note.

In Solidarity.



Omar Faruk Osman
GENERAL SECRETARY

